

**APEC Subcommittee on Standards and Conformance (SCSC)**  
**APEC Export Certification Roundtable**  
**Report to the SCSC**

**BACKGROUND**

On 30 July 2009, the APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum (FSCF), a group of food safety regulators from APEC member economies and key international stakeholders, met in Singapore and agreed to reaffirm its commitment to work together to build robust food safety systems so as to accelerate progress towards harmonization of food standards with international standards, as recommended in the World Trade Organization's SPS/TBT Agreements, to improve public health and to facilitate trade. At that meeting, work on food inspection and certification systems was identified as a top priority. Subsequently, the self-funded project of the United States entitled "APEC Export Certification Roundtable" was agreed upon and scheduled on the sidelines of and complementary to the work of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS).

This report summarizes the discussions and outcomes of the APEC Export Certification Roundtable held in Australia on February 25-26, 2010.

**OVERVIEW**

The Roundtable marked the first-ever meeting of industry and government stakeholders from the APEC region to discuss opportunities and obstacles to greater global alignment of export certification requirements. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) partnered with Australia's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the University of Maryland's Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN) to sponsor this event.

The APEC Export Certification Roundtable was held on February 25-26, 2010, in Surfer's Paradise, Australia, immediately preceding the Eighteenth session of the CODEX Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS). Twenty of the 21 member economies participated<sup>1</sup> and 8 served as speakers or moderators<sup>2</sup>. Steering Committee Member of the APEC Partnership Training Institute Network (PTIN) and Chief Scientist of Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Dr Paul Brent, provided the keynote address. The event attracted over 70 experts from across the APEC region; 70 percent represented APEC Member Economies and 30 percent represented food manufactures or associations. The publically available presentations

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<sup>1</sup> Russia did not send a representative.

<sup>2</sup> Speakers and moderators represented Australia, China, Chile, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand and the United States. In addition, the former U.S. delegate and current Chairman of CCFICS jointly facilitated the event.

and documents will be located on JIFSAN<sup>3</sup> and APEC Meeting Document Database websites.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

*Definition: “An export certificate is a paper or electronic document requested by an importing nation which describes and/or attests to animal health or product safety, production, or processing methods, packaging, labeling, or specific attributes of a food/food ingredient intended for international destinations. An export certificate may also attest to the status of the manufacturing or packaging establishment producing such food for export.”*

While export certificates facilitate trade in food and agricultural products, the procedures for export certification have grown more complex as regulators strive to ensure food safety throughout the supply chain. The growing trend in export certification includes duplicative, redundant, unavailable, and/or unnecessary export certification requirements. The APEC Export Certification Roundtable was designed to provide a forum to:

- enhance knowledge and input related to Codex guidance on export certification;
- identify common export certification challenges and discuss options to address those challenges;
- review the basis for requirements on the export certificate;
- identify which requirements may not be necessary language for export certification and why;
- share information on best practices and effective solutions;
- promote the use of risk-based export certification requirements; and
- develop common understandings and “best practices” that APEC Members can agree upon in dealing with export certificates.

## **SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATIONS**

**Greg Read** (Chairman of CCFICS) and **Cathy Carnevale** (Consultant and former U.S. head of delegation to CCFICS) hosted the two-day event, beginning with the keynote address by Dr. Paul Brent, Steering Committee Member of the APEC Partnership Training Institute Network (PTIN) and Chief Scientist of Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

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<sup>3</sup> The main JIFSAN website is <http://www.jifsan.umd.edu>, while the documents specific to the APEC Export Certification Roundtable are located at [http://www.jifsan.umd.edu/events/event\\_record.php?id=33](http://www.jifsan.umd.edu/events/event_record.php?id=33)

- **Dr. Paul Brent** introduced briefly the role that export certification plays in international trade in food, before outlining his belief that the roundtable presents the perfect synergy for the PTIN by collaborating so closely with an official CODEX event.
- **Bi Kexin**, Director at AQSIQ (People's Republic of China) provided an overview of official export certification in global food trade, focusing on the format and content of such certificates, as well as the roles of the competent authority and the industry. Following a brief presentation of China's export certification experiences, the participants had a robust dialogue on the suggestions for collaboration on the future usage and format for official certification.
- **Mary Ann Green**, Executive Director of the Food Safety and Consumer Protection Directorate at CFIA (Canada) provided an introduction to the role of risk in selecting the appropriate usage of an export certificate.
- **Mary Stanley**, Director of Office of International Policy at USDA (United States) provided an overview of the Codex Alimentarius Guidance Documents on Export Certification and the Codex Generic Model Official Certificate, to lay the groundwork for a discussion on the future usage of the documents to facilitate trade across the APEC region.
- **Takuya Konda**, Deputy Director and **Toshitaka Higashira**, Senior Technical Officer at MHLW (Japan) provided their breakout session with Japan's insights on why and/or when should countries require official export certificates, leading to a broader discussion on the underlying principles, rational and regulatory policies.
- **Bill Jolly**, Deputy Director at the NZFSA (New Zealand) focused his breakout participants on a discussion of the essential information that is exchanged between countries via an export certificate, and how that information should relate to the requirement, if any, for specific data elements.
- Industry participants were led in a discussion by **Kim Leighton** of AFGC (Australia) and **Peggy Rochette** of GMA (United States) on their role in official certification, focusing on suggestions that could be agreed to by industry and government participants.
- **Cathy Carnevale** and **Greg Read** provided a brief overview of the pre-survey results on the use and underlying objectives of export certification across APEC member economies.
- **Krissana Sukhumparnich**, Senior Food Technologist, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (Thailand) and **Philip Corbet**, Quality and Technical Group Manager, Simplot (Australia) presented their respective views on government and industry objectives related to choosing the certification requirements that match the underlying objectives, including discussion of what to do when one certificate requires attestations from more than one competent authority.
- **Mafia Eugenia Rojas San Martin**, Veterinarian, Fisheries Health Department (Chile) and **Julie Adams**, Vice President, California Almond Board (United States) presented their respective experiences on government and industry collaboration to facilitate official certification.

- **Consuelo C. Baltazar**, Supervising Aquaculturist,/Head, Administrative Support and Product Certification Unit (Philippines) and **Charlotte Rose**, Affiliate Supply Chain Manager, Mars Petcare (Australia) outlined the implications for trade and certification related to imposing unnecessary and redundant information on official certificates, focusing the audience on methods of prevention.
- **Drasko Pavlovic**, Senior Programme Manager of Electronic Certification, New Zealand Food Safety Authority (New Zealand) and **Richard Jones**, General Manager Service Delivery, GS1 (Australia) engaged the audience in a discussion on fraudulent certificates. Together they explored the role of e-certification as a tool to facilitate the underlying objective to recognize official certificates between APEC members. In addition, the group explored the linkages between commercial documents and official certificates.
- **Peggy Rochette**, Senior Director of International Affairs, Grocery Manufacturers of America (United States) provided an overview of upcoming APEC FSCF PTIN initiatives, focusing on the Expert Working Group meeting scheduled for May 9-10, 2010 in Washington, D.C.
- **Michael Wehr**, Senior Technical Advisor for International Affairs/Codex Manager, Food and Drug Administration (U.S.) summarized the progress of the two-day event, focusing on how APEC Member Economies might utilize the CCFICS Generic Model Official Certificate to address many of the concerns expressed.

## **OUTCOMES**

The Roundtable organizers were pleased, not only with the high level of attendance, but also with the level of engagement by attendees throughout the roundtable. The objectives of the Roundtable were met as it provided a forum for both government and industry representatives from APEC Member Economies to discuss common issues and concerns related to export certificates. The discussion led participants to the following conclusions and observations regarding the issuance and usage of official certificates in the region:

- Certificates are only one of several tools to provide assurances to the importing country regarding the effectiveness of the system of the exporting country
- Where a certificate is required the certificate should simplify and expedite border clearance
- There is a need to keep certificates simple and to avoid redundancy in certificates
- Focus on guidance provided in principles A and B of Codex Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates (CAC/GL 38-2001)
  - Official certificates should be required only where attestations and essential information is necessary to ensure food safety or fair practices in food trade

- Exporting countries may provide assurances through means other than consignment-by-consignment certificates as appropriate
- The differing needs of countries will define the nature and use of export certificates
- In some cases, country legislation may mandate use of certificates
- Export certificate requirements should be based on risk-based decisions
- Attestations should be appropriate for the product for which the certificate is required
- APEC Member Economies should, where possible use experience, knowledge and confidence to reduce the need for certificates
- APEC Member Economies should employ standard formats whenever possible-use, e.g. utilizing Codex guidance
- There is value in enhancing the use of electronic certification in the region
- Establishing a relationship between the exporting and importing countries is important in understanding the needs of the importing country for assurance and the best way those assurances may be satisfied

### **NEXT STEPS**

As a result of the Roundtable dialogue, a number of possible next steps were identified. Key among these were: the possibility of APEC providing technical assistance on avoiding unnecessary certificate requirements; a project on how the Generic Model Official Certificate Annex to the Codex Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates (CAC/GL 38-2001) can be more broadly utilized among APEC Member Economies; a project on enhancing the use of electronic certification in the APEC region; having APEC individual economies review their certification requirements for food and consideration in proposing that CCFICS consider additional work on incorporating appropriate attestations in the generic model certificate.